

Emergency Operations



Emergency flood fight measures at Wahpeton, North Dakota in 1997

Overview

One of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers missions is to provide assistance, within its authorities, when natural disasters or other emergencies occur. Emergency preparedness and response is primarily a state and local responsibility. However, in instances when the nature of the disaster exceeds the capabilities of state and local interests, the Corps of Engineers may provide help to save human life, prevent immediate human suffering or mitigate property damage. This information sheet provides a general overview of the Corps emergency assistance programs.

Disaster Preparedness

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is prepared to provide immediate and effective response and assistance during emergencies and disasters. The preparedness program includes an emergency management organization, planning, training, maintaining adequate supplies, tools and equipment, and inspection program for non-Federal flood control structures.

Type of Assistance Provided

- Participation in emergency seminars and exercises when requested by state or local officials.
- Inspection of flood control works constructed or repaired by the Corps of Engineers, and advice to local officials of needed maintenance.
- Technical assistance for development of plans at the state and local level.
- Upon request, inspection of non-Federal dams and flood control projects.

Advance Measures

Advance measures prior to predicted flooding consist of those activities performed to protect against loss of life and damage to improved property from flooding. There must be an imminent threat of flooding present before advance measures can be considered. The threat must be of a nature that if action is not taken immediately, damages will be incurred.

Type of Assistance Provided

- Strengthening of Federal and non-Federal flood control structures
- Construction of temporary levees to protect life and improved property. Removal of these structures is a local responsibility
- Channel clearance and dredging of Federal projects to restore original design capacity
- Relieving threat of flooding from possible dam failures by dewatering the impoundment, controlled breaching or strengthening of the structure

Criteria for Corps Assistance

- An imminent threat of unusual flooding must exist. The threat must be established by National Weather Service forecasts or by Corps determinations of unusual flooding from adverse conditions.
- A written request from the governor for Corps assistance is required. Request must be technically feasible and economically justified.
- Advance measures assistance will be in support of state and local on-going or planned efforts. Non-Federal interests must commit all available resources (i.e., manpower, supplies, equipment, funds, etc.).

Emergency Assistance

The Corps of Engineers may provide emergency assistance for flood response and post flood response activities to save lives and protect improved property (i.e., public facilities/services and residential/commercial developments) during or following a flood or coastal storm. Exclusive assistance to individual homeowners and businesses, including agricultural businesses, is not permitted.

Emergency Operations assistance will be undertaken to supplement state and local efforts. Non-Federal interests

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must commit all available resources. This includes manpower, supplies, equipment, funds, etc.

Flood fighting measures are applicable to any flood control structures or other areas that provide public service, regardless of whether it is Federal, public or private.

The Corps has no authority under Public Law 84-99 to reimburse locals for costs of their own emergency activities.

Flood Response

Type of Assistance Provided

- Assist in search and rescue operations.
- Furnish technical advice and assistance.
- Provide emergency repairs to levees and other flood control projects.
- Furnish materials such as sandbags, polyethylene sheeting, lumber, pumps, or rock for stabilization when the Corps is actively participating in a flood fight.
- If the Corps is not actively participating in a flood fight, Government supplies may be furnished only if local resources are exhausted or will be exhausted. Under such circumstances, supplies will be replaced in kind or paid for by local interests. All unused stock should be returned or reimbursed to the Government at replacement cost.

Corps assistance terminates when the emergency is over (when flood waters have receded within top of bank or some other predetermined stage).

Post Flood Response

Authority to perform post flood activities immediately after a flood or coastal storm is provided by Public Law 84-99, as amended. Corps assistance must be required immediately and is limited to major flood or coastal storm disasters resulting in life-threatening or property-damaging situations.

Type of Assistance Provided

- Furnish technical advice and assistance.
- Clearing drainage channels, bridge openings, or structures blocked by debris deposited during the event.
- Clearing blockages of critical water supply intakes and sewer outfalls.
- Debris removal necessary to reopen vital transportation routes
- Temporary restoration of critical public services or facilities.
- Identify hazard mitigation opportunities.

Criteria for Corps Assistance

- Assistance must be supplemental to state and local efforts.
- Requires written request from the governor or his authorized representative.
- Corps policy requires local interests to furnish the following items of cooperation and assurances prior to the undertaking of any work: (1) provide without cost to the United States all lands, easements, and rights-of-way necessary; (2) hold and save the United States free of damaged due to the authorized work, exclusive of damages due to the fault or negligence of the United States or its contractor; and (3) if feasible, operate and maintain the emergency work or remove temporary work constructed by the Corps.

Corps assistance may only be provided for a maximum of 10 days from the date of receipt of the governor's written request for assistance.

Additional Emergency Operations

- The Corps of Engineers may rehabilitate flood control structures damaged or destroyed by floods.
- The Corps of Engineers, within

specific guidelines, may be authorized to provide emergency drinking water to communities that confronted with water supply problems associated with drought or a contaminated water source.

How to Obtain Help

Contact your local emergency management officials. They will contact the proper person at the State level, and if required, the State will contact the Corps of Engineers. Emergency Operations Managers have been appointed to each Corps district to carry out all emergency actions. Each is responsible for maintaining an emergency organization of trained specialists. Most important, however, each district has a single point of contact for all emergency activities.

The St. Paul District point of contact is:

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St Paul District